

May 2021

Uniter



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SILVER SPRING
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WORSHIP SERVICES

**Music begins at 10:30 AM / Service at 11:00 AM
Zoom Coffee Hour at 12:00 PM**

How to Join Worship

- A. Join the Livestream by visiting the church's [YouTube](#) page
- B. Join the sign language interpretation on Zoom (link in weekly all church emails)
- C. Attend virtual coffee hour on Zoom (link in weekly all church emails)

Having trouble tuning in for worship?

Please email administrator@uucss.org
with your name and phone number to be connected with a volunteer who can help.

May 2: Worthy of Our Praise, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

After the inauguration of President Biden some of you asked what book a UU might choose to place their hand upon to take the oath of office. This week in worship we explore one liberal religious way to decide which stories to give authority in our lives, and discern just what is truly worthy of our praise.

May 9: Eight Precious Things, Rev. Alexa Fraser

Eight precious things: We are all used to our 7 Principles and most of us have heard about a possible 8th Principle as well. This sermon will study all 8 principles as a group, and see how they fit together and complement one another. It might even lead us forward toward committing to adopting the 8th Principle.

May 16: Appreciation Sunday, Marsha Thrall, Interim DRE, and Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Everyone who has served with UUCSS this year has helped us turn pandemic lemons into lemonade. This week we lift up, in appreciation, our RE teachers, Board, committees, councils, everyone who has helped us serve out our mission. We will give thanks for their resilience, flexibility, and dedication and consider how these hard won lessons will serve us in the year ahead.

May 23: Blessings of the Body, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

Throughout our lives, our relationships with our bodies evolve and change as we age. This week in worship we will turn aside from the stories dominant culture would have us believe about our bodies and consider what our faith has to teach us about the preciousness of all bodies.

May 30: Bearers of Memory, Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt

This Memorial Day weekend, we will honor those who have died in service to this country, remember the origins of this holiday, and consider the role of memory in ensuring that the mistakes of the past are not repeated.

INSPIRE

Minister's Column by Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt



Our worship theme for the month of May is “story” and the questions I keep coming back to are these: Do we write the story of our lives, or are our lives shaped by the stories of others and the larger story of the world around us?

This question feels poignant as the centuries-old scripts of white supremacy, patriarchy, and cis-heteronormativity continue to be revealed. It’s hard to write and live out the stories of our own lives when the world is full of harmful stories told about us. This question feels poignant also as we witness communities and governments continuing to navigate our collective path out of this pandemic. The virus isn’t something humanity chose, but we’ve seen how the choices other people make about their own safety impacts our own.

Like so many things in our lives, I think the answer to my question is that we both write our own stories, and those stories are shaped by the stories of others and that of the world. Our free faith is rooted in our power to make choices as individuals, but personal choice can never be separated from the choices of the community.

Many of our stories over the last year have been about the importance of doing whatever is necessary to stay safe, to protect our democracy, to prevent virus spread, to care for one another in the midst of very real threats. While the danger is certainly not past, and while precautions are still very much necessary, I believe it’s time that we shift from mere survival stories and into the story of how we will emerge from this tough chapter thriving. How do we shift from feeling always on the defense and into feeling like resilient people navigating choppy seas yet headed toward liberation and joy? What story about yourself, about the different communities of which you are part, will help you move into the future with a sense of your own power and possibility and accountability not just to one another but the generations to come?

This month we will be taking a deep dive into the stories we tell about ourselves, others, and the world around us in virtual Sunday services. Meanwhile, toward the end of the month we hope to begin dipping our toe carefully into a few in-person gatherings. I’m so proud to be your minister, to be in community with such dedicated and resilient people, and to be part of writing the next chapter of this community together.

Message From Carl Miller, Board President



It's spring now, and it feels to me like the end of a long, deep freeze. My household is talking for the first time about possible trips that we might take after COVID-19 vaccinations (Massachusetts, Michigan, maybe California...). It's surreal to remember traveling before the pandemic. I remember the energy of crowds, and the vibrant look of the world when I wasn't seeing it through a computer screen. It was so long ago.

Recent board discussions have covered the board's strategic planning report, revised policies for the structure of volunteer groups at UUCSS, and preparations for our upcoming Annual Meeting in June. One thing unique about this year's Annual Meeting is that we will include a vote on the proposed 8th Principle for the church. This principle (which is being considered at many UU churches right now) specifically names "dismantl[ing] racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions" as one of our central intentions. We're grateful to the 8th Principle Task Force (Catherine Buckler, Jane Jackson, Susannah Leigh, Mary Beth Lerner, Al Nathan, Phyllis Ryder, and Marsha Thrall) for bringing this proposal before the church. I hope that the recent wave of anti-racism work, here and elsewhere, will have a strong and lasting effect.

Whatever shape this year takes, it is going to be an exciting year. Re-opening the church will be gradual, and it may not be a linear process. The Transition-to-Reopening Task Force has given us a set of metrics that we can use (based mainly on local COVID-19 infection rates) to determine what kind of activities can be permitted at any given time. I hope our fellowship will be strong in spite of any constraints. We'll keep you posted.

I hope everyone is doing well during this time of renewal. I'll finish with this (abridged) poem by Billy Collins, entitled "Today."

*If ever there were a spring day so perfect,
so uplifted by a warm intermittent breeze
that you felt like taking
a hammer to the glass paperweight
on the living room end table,
releasing the inhabitants
from their snow-covered cottage
so they could walk out,
holding hands and squinting
into this larger dome of blue and white,
well, today is just that kind of day.*

When you get to travel again, where would you like to go and why? You're invited to share by commenting on the #ShareWithUs post found in the UUCSS private Facebook group.



LEARN



Religious Education Activities--for Children and Adults

Youth Religious Education

At UUCSS, we offer religious education for all ages. If you are not yet registered, you can do so for the following ages on our website at <https://uucss.org/children/>

- Pre-School (Ages 2-5) Parents of Preschoolers (POP!)
- Kindergarten through 1st Grade - “Love Surrounds Us” from Tapestry of Faith
- Grades 2 through 4 - “Love Will Guide Us” from Tapestry of Faith
- Grades 5 through 6 (Middle School A) - “Heeding the Call: Qualities of a Justice Maker” from Tapestry of Faith
- Grades 7 through 8 (Middle School B) - “Building Bridges: A World Religions Program” from Tapestry of Faith
- Grade 9 - Coming of Age (COA)
- Grades 10 through 12 - Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU)



CONNECT



EVENTS

Recurring and committee events can also be found on the Church Calendar at: <https://uucss.org/calendar/>

May 3, 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group.

May 6, 7:30 pm. Masterworks of Music: Monteverdi Vespers of 1610 (One of the most masterful and popular collections in early music). [Zoom.](#)

May 10, 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group.

May 13, 7:30 pm. Masterworks of Music: Debussy--La Mer & Nocturnes. [Zoom.](#)

May 14, 8 pm onward. Ladies Night Out. An informal Zoom chat for interested members and friends. <https://uucss.org/zoom4>. Join the church's Goups.io subgroup list: UUCSS | Ladies-Night-Out to get announcements.

May 15, 6 pm. Virtual Fellowship Dinner. For those that registered, be on the lookout for an email with the Zoom link

May 17, 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group.

May 20, 7:30 pm. Masterworks of Music: Women in Music Part 2: 20th Century (Florence Price). [Zoom.](#)

May 23, 7pm. Men's Book Group--Everybody (Else) Is Perfect by Gabrielle Korn. Through deeply personal and dark, but funny essays, Korn recounts her struggles to reconcile her long-held insecurities about her body. She comes out in the era of The L Word, where swoon-worthy lesbians are portrayed as skinny, fashion-perfect, and power-hungry. If you are interested in joining the discussion, contact Richard Lorr (rlorr4@gmail.com) to get the Zoom link and come to the next meeting!

May 24, 7:30 - 10:00 pm. Online Men's Group.

May 24, 7:30 - 9:30 pm. Women's Book Group--The House of Broken Angels by Luis Alberto Urrea. After a brief check-in, we have an open discussion of the book. One of us usually facilitates the wide-ranging conversation. It is informal and fun! Interested readers are welcome to join without a long-term obligation. Please contact Deb Weiner (dweiner04@gmail.com) for further details and the Zoom link.

May 27, 7:30 pm. Masterworks of Music: Early Rhythm and Blues and its influence with David Uffelman as guest speaker. [Zoom.](#)

Committee Updates

News from Our Hybrid Ministry Task Force--Part I

Preparing for worship services in the Fall, Rev. Kristin put together a Hybrid Ministry Task Force with representatives from the Music, Tech Support, Membership, Religious Education, and Worship Committees, as well as from the team charged with safety policies for transitioning to in-person activities. This is Part I of two Uniter articles that will summarize the work of our Task Force as we prepare for services that will originate in the Sanctuary.

Today's FAQs address how we expect to begin the transition to a combination of live and live-stream services in September and what they will look and feel like for the congregation. Part II in the June Uniter will outline our goals beyond September, as we continue to work toward the best mix of in-person and online worshipping for the congregation. If you wish to offer feedback as we move into hybrid services together, please contact me, Bruce McConachie, at worshipchair@uucss.org. Or talk with other members of the Task Force, which includes Tina Borrer, Rob Dahlstrom, Michael Holmes, Steve Leete, Nadine Raley, Jacob Ryder, Kandra Strauss-Riggs, and Marsha Thrall.

How can we be sure it will be safe to begin worshipping in the Sanctuary?

Our Task Force will follow the guidelines established by the "Transitioning to In-Person Activities" Team, already endorsed by the UUCSS Board. The guidelines provide clear metrics for deciding when we may resume in-person activities and protocols for how we can participate in outdoor and indoor events. Although the Task Force anticipates that the dangers of the pandemic will have substantially declined by September, we will not do services in the Sanctuary until the metrics provided by Montgomery and PG counties have been rated acceptable (by our standards) for 4 weeks. Even then, we will limit the number who may worship together in the Sanctuary to 63 adults and children, the number determined by the Transition Team as safe for the square footage of the Sanctuary, plus the foyer/lobby.

Given these limitations, how will we determine who gets to worship in the Sanctuary?

There will be a sign-up system to ensure that every family gets an opportunity once in a while to participate in a live service. Initially, as we work out the kinks, we will probably have very few congregants in the Sanctuary. But that number will rise ASAP because we want to involve members and friends in "Joys and Sorrows" and children in the storytelling during "A Time for All Ages." For these and similar worship activities, there will be safe and appropriate movement and seating requirements within the Sanctuary. Other safety measures--masks, no singing, taking attendance, etc.--will also be observed.

How else will in-person worship differ from what we have grown accustomed to online?

Our present services are videotaped ahead of time and broadcast on Sunday morning. We plan to continue this practice during the summer months, which will allow us to use videos from other churches when Rev. Kristin is on vacation during July. Come September, though, if all goes well, most of the content in our hybrid services will be live-streamed. What the minister and the worship associates do and say in the Sanctuary will be simultaneously broadcast onto home screens. The congregation will see video cameras in the Sanctuary. Because our choir cannot safely perform inside due to COVID-19 restrictions, nearly all of our music will continue to be pre-taped. Musicians and the choir will likely appear on a large screen above the pulpit, in arrangements similar to what we now see online.

How long will these kinds of restrictions continue?

That's impossible to say at this time. We will continue to be guided by the metrics and protocols of the Transition Team as we innovate our way toward a good mix of in-person and live-stream services.

Will we ever get back to “normal?”

If you mean a return to all of the ways we held Sanctuary-only services in February 2020, before the pandemic, the answer from the Hybrid Ministry Task Force may disappoint you. I'll be discussing some of the reasons we believe UUCSS should continue to develop our online presence through hybrid worship services in Part II of this article. Building a new normal together will have significant advantages for our congregation.

Report from the Racial Justice Task Force

As we write this, our nation again reels from the murder of Daunte Write, a Black motorist shot by a police officer. We feel the terror of police and gun violence closer to home, with the murder James Johnson and Dominique Williams by an off-duty Pentagon Police Officer, at Takoma Overlook in Takoma Park, MD. We listened to the verdict of Derek Chauvin, adding hope that the justice system will continue to recognize that America cannot survive if we continue to permit law enforcement to kill.

The work of ending racial violence is long and hard. And it is spiritual work. It is work that we as a Congregation have the opportunity to embrace.

The UUCSS Board has before it, for passage, a "Resolution to Adopt the 8th Principle"--drafted by the 8th Principle Task Force--that will come before the congregation at our Congregational Meeting in June.

You can find the resolution on the UUCSS website, along with several FAQ sheets about the principle, the resolution and the process we'll use at the Congregational Meeting. You can also find a list of our upcoming events, as we continue to offer opportunities to explore what it means to "build a diverse, multicultural Beloved Community" and to "accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions within ourselves and our institutions."

The resolution is drafted with an intention to create an openness--not to provide a complete and fixed path for action, but to emphasize that the 8th Principle offers a new avenue for reexamining ourselves. The work is ever evolving; we don't attempt to promise what we don't know. Our main message is that as a congregation, we can grow spiritually and live our values more fully by embracing the ideals and the actions in the 8th Principle. Want to know more?

- Check out the 8th Principle page on the UUCSS website for more resources and a schedule of upcoming events
- Come to Sunday coffee hour discussions about the 8th Principle
- If you serve on a church Committee, follow up on the discussion from the April Program Council and talk with your committee about how the 8th Principle might shape the important work you have done and continue to do
- Reach out to the Racial Justice Task Force (racialjusticetaskforce@uucss.org) with questions, thoughts, and comments

Volunteer Spotlight

Laurie Mears



Laurie Mears started off as a child in Unitarianism, and that's important. Unitarians were rare birds in Kansas in the 1940s and early 50s, and the congregation held their children as precious. She always felt that folks were interested in her and who she was becoming. Fast forward to college, where she meets Preston Mears on his way to the Episcopal priesthood in New England and Laurie's Episcopal phase begins.

It was not until moving to Southern Maryland that being Episcopal became harder as the content of sermons was very different than New England. Together Preston and Laurie tried Davies Unitarian-Universalist Congregation and liked it for both message and inclusiveness. Over time, however, the church's RE program for children and youth lost emphasis, and the recruitment of teachers became increasingly difficult. They started with UUCSS, looked no further, and were soon followed by their daughter Rachel's family.

Laurie had spent her career teaching children and had always found it rewarding. After a few years settling in at UUCSS, she started teaching pre-K with a great team of Dan Greenstein, Sandra Sackett, and Tina Terrill. She enjoyed being able to attend services and the experience of working with children. The pandemic has made things more difficult but that work still brings joy. When asked what she would like to say to the congregation it was, "Have children be as much of the congregation as anyone else. Incorporate them into everything from events to services. Their joys and concerns are important too." Well, our children are blessed by the love and concern that Laurie shows them.

Community Partner of the Month

Middle Collegiate Church

Our community partner this month is Middle Collegiate Church in New York City. Although not a local charity, as we normally partner with, it is nonetheless near and dear to many in our congregation as the host of the annual Revolutionary Love Conference that many in our congregation have attended for almost a decade. Middle, as it is affectionately known, describes itself as a "... a multicultural, multi-ethnic, inter-generational movement of Spirit and justice, powered by Revolutionary Love, with room for all." Led by the brilliant and fearless Rev. Jacqui Lewis, Middle is showing the world how to build the beloved community one determined step at a time.

Sadly, Middle's beautiful, historic sanctuary burned to the ground in December of 2020. This is a huge loss, not only for those that attend regularly, but also for those of us who have worshipped in their beautiful sanctuary or learned in their meeting spaces. Despite this loss, Middle is undeterred in their ministry and states that "no fire can stop Revolutionary Love." Here is a beautiful video about the fire which captures Middle's magnificent spirit: <https://youtu.be/qGnue7p4B7c>

Rebuilding their physical space will be a long and costly process. This month, UUCSS is choosing to share our monetary gifts with Middle, to help them rebuild and in honor of all the gifts they share with the world every day.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

New Co-Editor for Uniter Needed!

This year, Lynn Cave and Becca Stucky took on co-editing for the Uniter.

Lynn helps gather and edit articles and then Becca does the layout using a Word template, designs any Facebook posts, and does a final copy edit. It's a great way to keep up with the happenings at UUCSS and flex your creative muscles!

Editing for the Uniter runs from August (to be ready in time for the September article) through May.

We're looking for a new co-editor to take Becca's place, as she and family are moving to British Columbia this summer. Training is included!

Zoom-ing for UUCSS Meetings

Good news! You can now schedule and run Zoom meetings for church-related events yourself! Also this new scheduling method eliminates meeting collisions.

Be on the lookout for all-church emails that give detailed instruction how to:

- Schedule a church-related Zoom meeting
- Attend a church-related Zoom meeting
- Run a church-related Zoom meeting

In addition, the instructions are also on the UUCSS WIKI at <http://wiki.uucss.org/>.

Contacting Rev. Kristin

If you'd like to chat or have a pastoral visit, please go to www.calendly.com/rev-kristin-schmidt where you can schedule an appointment.

Office hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, 8am-2pm. Emails are checked.

Day off: Monday

Writing day: Wednesday

Contact number for phone and text: 202-780-7164

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FIRST CLASS

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Submissions are due by the 17th of the prior month.
Uniter's are published monthly September-June by the Unitarian
Universalist Church of Silver Spring.

Send information and visuals to uniter@uucss.org.

Format guidelines for submissions: Text must be in a form that it can
be edited, either in a Google Doc (preferred), Word file, or in the body
of an email that can be copied and pasted. Graphics must be in a
format in which they can be repositioned and resized—jpeg is greatly
preferred.

Co-editors are **Lynn Cave** and **Becca Stucky**.

To receive a PDF email version of the newsletter, contact the church
office at administrator@uucss.org.

To receive a mailed copy of the **Uniter** for the year, please send **\$24**
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